

Georgia: Margaret Silliman, Rachael Liu, Cristina Dalton.

Idaho: Samuel Cuentas, Rebecca Levi, Christiana Stone, Jesse Cole, Annabelle Day, Solveig Norton.

Illinois: Natalia Czachorowski, Mary Kuprianczyk, Samia Abdul-Qadir, Adam Koszyk, Jason Yang, Clayton Pope, DeAnna Pope.

Indiana: Lauren Ciulla, Matthew Frye, Emily Huff.

Iowa: Susan Alverio.

Kansas: Vasavi Garimella, Jared Gillen, Arjun Mahajan, Ryan Mohamadi, Katherine Walsworth, Irfan Ansari.

Kentucky: Katherine Speece, John Garland, Zachariah Kiser, Mackenzie Rigney, Kayla Sears.

Louisiana: Sean Thomas.

Maryland: Hansel Motiram, Ryan Briscoe, Madeline Carwile, Lucy Lee, WeiAnne Reidy, Alix MacKillop, Clara da Silva, Nikhil Swaminathan.

Massachusetts: Mikayla Steele, Alexandra Duplin, Ishan Shukla, Harrison Theodore, Maria Theodore.

Michigan: Emily Deese, Jeremy Tang, Emma Hicks, Sara Trojanowski, Emily Prokop, Thomas Libcke.

Minnesota: Emily Baer, Matthew Baer, Braden O'Connor, Payton Puerzer.

Mississippi: Lane Mitchell, Abby Pitts, Mamie Albritton.

Missouri: Olivia Hoijarvi, Allison Licavoli, Natalie Dameron.

Nebraska: Luis Sanchez-Romo, John Paul Terneus, Terese Navarra, Ethan Nelson.

Nevada: David Tegtmeier, Sara Tegtmeier, Neha Zafar, Taimur Khalid.

New Jersey: Satchel Bell, Funda Akilli, David Crain III, Michael Doliszny, Madison Gandy, Marta Majewski, Amanda Olivio, Urv Patel, Anthony Uzzolina, Andrew Laberee, Dominic Esposito, Christopher Lauria, Mitchell Lauria, Maya Ravichandran, Allison Wetherell, Erica Wu, Rahul Yerrabelli, Nicholas Coleburn, Ryan Robert Murphy, Vaed Prasad, Felicia Aschettino, Madilyn Somers, Lindsay Fogel, Maura Herbertson, Thiago Santos, Elena Boal, Priya Vulchi.

New York: Heejin Han, Christopher Kim, Naome Sajjani, Genevieve Bruen, Edward McCabe, Santo Tiralosi, Mahika Had, Fiona Dubrosa, William Gregson, Allison Herskovitz, Zachary Kunow, Kathleen Schofield, Lucas Zhao, Charles Siragusa, Gabriel Curcione.

North Carolina: Holly Hutcheson, Jacob Rowe, Emma Morris, Thomas Douglas, Capri D'Souza, Caroline Fitzgerald, Lauraleigh Guthrie, Jack Maginnes, Delaney Dunlap, Jenna Viveiros, Bennett David, Ashley Jamison, Kathryn Ellis, Jordan Feldman, Lawton Gresham.

Ohio: Natalie Carter, Ellen Haney, Pakrush Katragadda, Katherine Skelly, Max Lee, Hannah Addington, Arihant Chordia, Vidur Prasad, Sanjana Yerubandi, Laurel Grae, Jaidev Sharma, Alan Ai, Dusstyn Reynolds.

Oklahoma: Luisamaria Rubio.

Oregon: Kendall Fleshman, Megan Baumhardt.

Pennsylvania: Nisha Arya, Joshita Varshney, Elizabeth Belka, Victoria Belka, Noah Berkowitz, Seth Berkowitz, Lindsay Fullerton, Samantha Gable, Jasna Janikic, Erin Markham, Emily Matthews, Swathi Prakash, Anthony Radcliffe, Kristen Sparhawk, Stephanie Waldstein, Indra Alagar, Jaya Alagar, Krishnan Alagar, Rajan Alagar, Sarah Laible, Teja Polisetty.

Rhode Island: Aidan Sowa, Ryan Sowa.

South Carolina: Maggie Bowyer, Mary Grace Shannon, Jeremy Ward.

Tennessee: Evan Ladd, Carmen Ross, Grant Gammon.

Texas: Chelsea Parrott, Briana Gonzalez, Ruveyda Karaca, Almaas Khan, Gopal Raman, Monica Attaway, Edward Cen, Adam Hoffman, BJ Kim, Animate Mazurek, Miki Somosot, Srikanth Anantha, Tejna Dasari, Ashish Dave, Shrey Derasari, Siri Jois, Emily Jue, Eric Li, Rahul Popat, Charles Wang, Lauren Yang, Darrel Dennis, James Hefner, Jarrod Clark, Shan Su, Joseph Nemece.

Utah: Hannah Brau, Mariah Pay, Payam Rasheed, Sofia Tiratto, Madison Arriaza, Saja Hassoun, McKenna O'Connor.

Virginia: Caroline Yi, Jordan Hibbs, Kimberly Laker, Lisa Huang, Pavan Krishnan.

Washington: Andrew Chin, David Singleton, Benjamin Stewart, John McManis, Rachel Demaree, Isabella Maehl, Katherine Chen, Nathan Chen, Nicholas Grosinger, Alexandra Marsh, Jessica Waller, William Waller.

West Virginia: Alonzo Webb.

Wyoming: Bailey Anderson, Grace Anderson, Lexi Bedard, Maxwell Bockmann, Sara Brennecke, Molly Burns, Tanner Laurence Christensen, Kaitlyn Erramouspe, Elexis Forgey, Benjamin Gallagher, Daniel Garcia, Liam Guille, Charlotte Hecht, Jarom Herring, Lily Joslin, Carli Knight, Konnar Knotwell, Cassidy Little, Thomas Lubnau III, Gregory Marchal, Patrick Marchal, Conner Martin, Luke McIlvain, Nicholas Nelson, Megan Pachniak, Giovanni Pizzato, McKenzie Powell, Devrae Russell, Karen Russell, Meagan Skolnick, Jaycie Wells, Ben Wetzel.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, on June 5, 2017, the Senate adopted S. Res. 176, a resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. I am a cosponsor of this resolution. Unfortunately, I missed the vote due to a delayed flight. If I were in Washington, DC, during the time of this vote, I would have cast my vote in support of this resolution.

#### DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, earlier this month, the Senate passed by voice vote the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. I recognize this bill is the result of a bipartisan compromise, and I commend Senator TESTER, ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, for his efforts to find agreement on this particularly challenging issue.

Everyone in a position of public trust, particularly those serving at the VA, must be held accountable for their actions. Whistleblowers must also be protected so that misconduct can be brought to light. This balance between accountability and transparency is essential to ensure that the services provided to the public—particularly to veterans—are of the highest quality and that we can attract the best and brightest to Federal service.

Unfortunately, while the bill passed by Congress seeks to strike the appropriate balance, I remain seriously concerned about some of the bill's provisions

which would expedite the process of terminating employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, by reducing current due process protections.

To ensure the integrity of the Federal civil service, it is essential that Federal employees have access to constitutionally protected due process rights. Specifically, the bill lowered the evidentiary standard for firing rank-and-file employees for misconduct from "preponderance" of the evidence, 50 percent or more, to substantial, 30 percent or more. Reducing due process protections for rank-and-file VA employees in this manner will make it harder for the Federal Government to attract the best and brightest to public service.

During the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee's consideration of the bill, I cosponsored an amendment offered by Senator BROWN to strike the section of the bill lowering the evidentiary standard. Unfortunately, the amendment was not adopted. Going forward, I intend to closely monitor the VA's implementation of the act to see that these new authorities are not abused in order to retaliate against VA workers. Not only would this be unfair, but it would also exacerbate the Department's challenging retention issues.

I am also disappointed that this bill does not address the longstanding recruitment and retention issues facing the VA. According to the VA, there are over 30,000 vacancies across the VA, including over 150 in Hawaii, for frontline medical personnel that this administration has not filled as of the end of January 2017.

The over 40,000 veterans in Hawaii who are enrolled in the VA healthcare system deserve the best healthcare and highest ethical and professional standards from those they depend on to provide that care. While we must ensure whistleblowers can come forward without fear of retaliation and those who violate the public trust are held accountable, the VA cannot effectively carry out its mission without being fully staffed.

While this legislation was supported by VA Secretary Shulkin and makes some useful changes to improve accountability, we still have much work to do to ensure that veterans in Hawaii and across the country have access to the best healthcare we can provide.

Therefore, going forward, I will closely monitor the VA's implementation of this law to ensure that the changes made are not abused. I will also continue working to see that the staff vacancies in Hawaii and across the country are filled with qualified personnel.

#### MINORITY HEALTH

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am deeply disappointed by the secrecy that has been employed by my colleagues in their reckless attempts to gut the Affordable Care Act. It is clear to me that, in the absence of hearings,